

CHURCH-BUILDING INTELLIGENCE, &c.

Salisbury.—At the quarterly meeting of the Committee of the Diocesan Church Building Association, held at the Board-room, in the Close, on Tuesday week, Archdeacon Lear in the chair, the following grants were voted:—60*l.* towards restoring and providing increased accommodation in the parish of Coombe Bisset; 25*l.* towards lengthening the nave and repewing the church of Bedgehill; 200*l.* towards the extensive enlargement and new pewing of Melkham Church, Wilts, &c. A former grant of 200*l.* to the new church at East Grafton, in the parish of Great Bedwyn, Wilts, was ordered to be paid, the church having been consecrated.

New Churches.—The friends of the Establishment in St. George's parish are going to erect two new churches in Pimlico—one in the Belgrave-road, near Warwick-square, and the other near the Orange Tavern.

A Chapel on Wheels.—The Wesleyan Methodists of the Bingham circuit have erected a moveable wooden meeting-house upon wheels, capable of seating about 120 persons, at a cost of about 60*l.*, for the accommodation of several villages where no site could be obtained.

The late William Stephenson, Esq., of Stamford, has secured by deed, for building a church in Deeping Fen, Lincolnshire, 4,000*l.*; for keeping it in repair, 200*l.*; for income for the minister, 5,000*l.*; total, 9,200*l.*

A new church has been erected in Birmingham, and will be consecrated on the 25th inst. by the Lord Bishop of Worcester. The church is dedicated to St. Stephen.

Correspondence.

SOUTHWELL CHURCH, NOTTS.

SIR,—In your number for June 22, I observed a notice *en passant* of some complaints made relative to a competition for Southwell Church, Notts; perhaps the following may furnish some comment on the same: the drawings were sent in on the 5th inst., on the 9th the committee forwarded their circular to the competitors, "that the plans of another architect had been thought more proper for the purposes of the committee." It would seem that two clear days, Saturday and Monday, were sufficient to enable the committee to examine (?), compare (?), and make their selection; perhaps a committee of professional men would feel some difficulty in coming to a conscientious decision in so short a space of time.

Your obedient servant and constant reader,
Friday, July 12, 1844.

SHAM COMPETITIONS.—DERBY LUNATIC ASYLUM.

SIR,—I am glad that your spirited correspondent, signed "A second Subscriber, but no Competitor," has directed attention to the decision relative to the design for the Derby Lunatic Asylum. In this instance, I had the opportunity of inspecting and minutely examining the whole of the designs submitted to the committee.

I have given considerable attention to the subject of lunatic asylums for several years, and have examined the principal establishments throughout the kingdom; from this circumstance, and from my experience and practice as an architect, I considered myself qualified to form an opinion of their merits. There were several good works among them, and a large number of a very inferior and even ridiculous character, such as we generally see in great public competitions.

I selected several designs in my own mind, such as I conceived the committee might recommend for examination, and certainly the motto, "Curator," of the approved design, was not among that number. The committee ought to have called in the assistance of some architect of eminence to report upon them; and I will venture to say, that if they had acted upon such report, the result would have been very different indeed.

I do not complain of any man availing himself of the influence of his friends. If influential persons have their pet, let them employ him; but for heaven's sake let them not trifle with us, in order to give a favourable colour to their proceedings, and make it appear that his works are so pre-eminent above

all others. The successful candidates may, in this instance, reap all the advantage of this jobbing, but I entirely deny that any honour is attached to it.

I do not understand upon what principle the sealed letters of those competitors, whose designs were not selected, were opened. They might surely have been apprized of the decision by the medium through which they were invited, and the designs would then have been applied for, as in other cases. I received mine per railway, unpaid, addressed to me.

In number 73, your correspondent, "A subscriber," puffs off the Derby Town Hall, which he says has a very commanding elevation. I am ready to admit that it stands in a commanding situation (an open market-place), but I must confess that, on my first view of the building, I was struck with its singular inelegance and bad outline. It appears to me to betray an entire absence of all good principles of architectural design, and presents a most awkward perspective effect. On my subsequent visits to this building, it lessened in my estimation, and appeared to exhibit a miserable poverty of design; it reminded me of the new-square style in Mr. Pugin's criticisms. When I contrasted with it the fine old tower of All Saints Church, and that of the Roman Catholic church, erected a few years since in Derby, I could not avoid observing (although they are of very different styles of architecture), as features of the town decoration, how greatly this building suffered by the comparison.

What the other designs sent in competition for this building may have been I know not, but it tells little for the credit of the sapient committee who advised and carried out its erection. I am by no means singular in my opinion; on the contrary, I found the building generally disliked by those of the gentry whom I met with in the town and neighbourhood. A wealthy and influential inhabitant of Derby assured me he considered it a disgrace to the town, and (much as he deprecated the calamity of fire) he should not regret to see it again destroyed, and another more worthy building substituted.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

A THIRD SUBSCRIBER AND A COMPETITOR.

SIR,—Seeing in your valuable paper a letter respecting the Derby Pauper Lunatic Asylum competition, and wishing that all such rascally tricks should be made public, I inclose you the instructions received from the committee in answer to the following questions:—

What expense is to be gone to?

What size and style is the building to be?

A plan of the ground, and general information.

Now, Mr. Editor, does it not carry upon its very face that it is a job from beginning to end, for what architect in his senses would ever think of competing on such instructions? The following letter accompanied the production:—

"Derby, 26th March, 1844.

"SIR,—In reply to your letter to Mr. Barber, I am directed to send you the foregoing general answers, being all the information he is at present able to furnish.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"Mr. ——— "S. WHITAKER."

And this is a specimen of competition.

Wishing every success to THE BUILDER,

I remain yours truly,

A LOVER OF FAIR PLAY, AND SUBSCRIBER FROM THE COMMENCEMENT.

The following are the general answers alluded to by our correspondent:—

"The site is not yet chosen, therefore no information depending upon locality, the nature of soil, &c., can at present be given.

"It is wished that the front of the building shall have a south aspect.

"The arrangement of the wards and offices, the general design and construction of the building, and the style of architecture, are for the consideration of the gentlemen who send in plans, and who will, of course, avail themselves of the information to be gathered from the most approved establishments of the same kind. The committee reserve their opinion on these points until all the plans are before them.

"The principle of warming and ventilation now in use at the Derby County Prison will be most satisfactorily ascertained, either by

inspecting the prison, or by application to Mr. Silvester, who superintended the warming and ventilating apparatus.

"The committee do not pledge themselves to adopt the cheapest plan."

SIR,—The letter in the last number of THE BUILDER, from "A Second Subscriber," will, I trust, do good, in helping to expose the infamous system of "Sham Competitions," and shew Mr. Dewsbury that, as the real circumstances of the case are now pretty generally known, he has no very great reason to plume himself as being the successful competitor, but ought rather to blush for the share he has had in the transaction; for *iv*, as reported, he sent in a set of drawings that had already been seen and approved by the Committee before the competition was thought of, I trust he sees that his own conduct, as a member of the profession, is not without blame; as he must have known that "the great expense," that many architects would put themselves to, would, in this instance, be wholly misapplied. The competition, I believe, was proposed merely to destroy a counter-influence that had been raised by the friends of Messrs. Scott and Moffat, who obtained the second premium. For myself, I had nothing to do with it, as I heard that Mr. Dewsbury was competing, and I was aware of his local influence; but I was foolish enough to send in a design for the church at Southwell, Notts, where a similar farce was enacted; and it is to be regretted that you did not give publicity to the "complaints" which you noticed, in No. 72, as having being received relative to the competition. I forwarded my drawings, seven in number (in the vain hope of standing on their merits), on the 6th of July, which, being Saturday, I may fairly suppose they were not laid before the committee until Monday, the 8th. In a day or two afterwards I received my drawings back again, with an intimation that, "although highly commended, they were not deemed so suitable as the plans of another competitor." This intimation was dated the EIGHTH, so that these wise men (perhaps none of whom had ever seen a set of drawings before) were so inspired, that in one short sitting they were enabled (by intuition, I suppose) to jump to a conclusion, and decide upon the merits of all the designs submitted for their notice. Now, is it not pretty evident that they must have selected their pet before-hand, and that the whole affair was a mere juggle, got up for some hidden purpose of their own? I will only add, that I never yet sent in any competition designs, but something or other came to light to shew the futility of doing so, without first having strong interest with the committee.—I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

17th July, 1844.

[We have received other letters, which, being to the same purpose, we deem it unnecessary to publish.—Ed.]

FALL OF HALSTED CHURCH STEEPLE.

SIR,—On Wednesday last, at half-past two o'clock in the afternoon, the spire and tower of the beautiful new church at Halstead, intended to be dedicated to the Holy Trinity, fell to the ground with a tremendous crash. It had reached the height of 115 feet before it fell, but for a fortnight past many persons have expressed their doubts that it could not stand, owing in a great measure, to the rapid manner in which it was being carried up, as much as 30 feet being executed during the week before it fell. On the day it fell, the mason, after he returned from dinner, could perceive that the cracks in the tower were much larger than they were before he left, which caused him to communicate with the other parties connected with the building, the result of which was, that the men were all ordered down directly from the scaffolding. They had all reached the ground in safety with the exception of two poor fellows who remained behind, at about 100 feet from the ground, to lower a ladder, and it is supposed they must have clung to the scaffolding, as one of them was very slightly bruised about the arms, but the other was more seriously hurt, having two dreadful cuts on the head and three ribs broken, but hopes are now entertained of his ultimate recovery. A third person met with a slight contusion by a brick falling upon his head, but was very little hurt. The con-